

# Maryland Legal Aid advocacy director Amy Petkovsek discusses Lawyer in the Library program



Amy Petkovsek works with Maryland Legal Aid who will host the Lawyer in the Library program at the North Carroll branch of the Carroll County Public Library.



By **Jacob deNobel**  
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**M**embers of Maryland Legal Aid will be on site at the North Carroll Branch of the Carroll County Public Library on Wednesday, starting at 1 p.m., to answer legal questions free of charge from Carroll County residents. *The Times* caught up with Director of Advocacy Amy Petkovsek to discuss the program, legal aid and the county.

**Q: How did you get involved with the program?**

**A:** Maryland Legal Aid developed the Lawyer in the Library program in the fall of 2015 with the Enoch Pratt Free Library system in Baltimore City, and this unique method of delivering legal services has now expanded to

partnerships with libraries across the state of Maryland. As a Director of Advocacy at Legal Aid, I am excited to oversee the growth and expansion of this important initiative. I grew up in Carroll County, graduated from Westminster High, and remain an active volunteer with the 4-H Youth Development program in Carroll County, so I was especially pleased to be able to expand Maryland Legal Aid's library programs to the county I called home for many years.

**Q: What kinds of topics will you be able to discuss with people?**

**A:** Maryland Legal Aid staff can provide assistance with family law, including divorce and child custody, public benefits — including **food stamps**, mobility, and social security disability appeals — consumer issues — including debt collection, bankruptcy — employment concerns, foreclosure, landlord-tenant disputes, domestic violence relief, criminal record expungement, and wills and estates.

**Q: Why is a program like this so important for the community?**

**A:** Community members often do not have direct access to free civil legal assistance, and are unsure where to turn for issues such as divorce, foreclosure, bankruptcy, public benefits, and expungement. Legal issues can cause barriers to employment, frustrations in family life, and quickly become complicated. Lawyers in the community can meet clients right where they live and work, to address these concerns.

**Q: What do you hope people take away from the program?**

**A:** Individuals can feel more at ease about their pending legal concerns, get a sense of direction about where to turn in the court system, and better understand how to navigate through their legal challenge. Just 10 or 15 minutes with an attorney can make all of the difference in reducing anxiety for an individual, and providing a road map for their next legal steps.

**Q: Are there things you won't be able to discuss?**

**A:** Legal Aid provides legal representation and advice in civil legal cases, which does not include any active criminal cases. So we cannot assist with criminal law questions.

**Q: This is the first of several events like this? How often are you planning on hosting events?**

**A:** Legal Aid brought our Lawyer in the Library program to Taneytown Library branch in the summer of 2017, and we hope to be in a Carroll County Public Library at least quarterly throughout 2018, if not more frequently.

**Q: Are there any topics people might not realize they could or should have consultation on?**

**A:** Legal Aid staff can provide assistance to those suffering from domestic violence, individuals whose homes are in foreclosure proceedings, those considering bankruptcy as a debt relief option, individuals with divorce or child custody questions, or those concerned about wills, estate and probate issues. Staff attorneys can also complete criminal record expungements from the library, to create a path to employment for clients.

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